



Testimony of D'Arcy Kemnitz SUPPORT SB 0022

Executive Director, The National LGBTQ+ Bar Association and Foundation - January 19, 2022

To: Chairman Smith and members of the Committee.

My name is D'Arcy Kemnitz and I'm the Executive Director at The National LGBT Bar Association and Foundation, and I am testifying in support of SB22. The LGBTQ+ Bar was founded over thirty years ago by a small group of family law practitioners at the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis. We promote justice in and throughout the legal profession for the LGBTQ+ community.

In 2003, the United States Supreme Court ruled that laws criminalizing homosexuality, including anti-sodomy laws, are unconstitutional. In *Lawrence v Texas* (2003), the court the clear ruling that LGBTQ+ Americans are entitled to equal dignity in the eyes of the state, and invalidated anti-sodomy laws across the nation.

Despite the ruling in Lawrence, many states, like Maryland, still have the progeny of discriminatory anti-sodomy laws in place. While unenforceable, the continued presence of Unnatural or Perverted Sexual Practice laws like those SB22 aims to repeal demonstrate a lack of support for LGBTQ+ citizens. The language in these outdated laws distinctly implies that same-sex attraction and relationships are inherently deviant, repulsive, and inferior to heterosexual attraction and relationships. Sections of the Annotated Code of Maryland perpetuate antiquated and bigoted beliefs that have no place in our modern society. The LGBT Bar knows such sentiments certainly have no place in Maryland.

Regardless of the effectiveness of such laws, their mere presence implicates that the state of Maryland values their LGBTQ+ residents less than their cisgender or heterosexual residents and promotes a culture of anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. In an age where transwomen of color are being assaulted and murdered at horrific rates, such oversight is simply inexcusable.

The LGBT Bar is confident that the Judicial Proceedings Committee and the great state of Maryland will vote in favor of SB22 and in favor of LGBTQ+ equality.

Thank you,

D'Arcy Kemnitz

Executive Director

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